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RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
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USDOC FOR 3317/ITA/OA/KBURRESS
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DOL FOR ANN ZOLLNER
TREASURY FOR DAN PETERS
STATE PASS USTR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECPS](#) [ELAB](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [EINV](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA TELECOM STRIKE CONTINUES JUNE 12

REF: ABUJA 1428

¶1. Summary. The strike at state-owned NITEL over unpaid wages continued on June 12, with no sign of an imminent resolution. The labor action also continued to have significant effects on communications and business in Nigeria. Internet access remained almost impossible, and many local and international calls were blocked. All NITEL lines in Lagos and Abuja remained switched off. Embassy Abuja and Consulate Lagos's USG-owned satellite communications (data circuitry) with Washington remained unaffected. End summary.

¶2. The nationwide strike by employees at Nigerian Telecommunications (NITEL) Limited worsened on June 11 when NITEL workers in the Federal Capital Territory joined the strike. Other NITEL employees went on strike starting June 4 over salaries overdue since February. Their labor action continued to have significant effects on communications and business in Nigeria. The country's four international telecommunications gateways, which are connected to the SAT-3 undersea cable, have been shut down, affecting Nigeria's connectivity to Africa and other parts of the world. NITEL owns and maintains the four gateways, located in Lanlate, Oyo State; Saka Tinubu, Lagos; Kujana, Kaduna State; and Enugu.

¶3. The strikers intended to paralyze telecom services throughout Nigeria on June 12, according to the press. NITEL employees would turn off all telecommunication switches linking NITEL to mobile service providers and also to the backbone networks that support their operations. Turning off these telecom switches would have a similar effect on private telecommunications operators (PTOs), who depend on NITEL's facilities and especially its interconnection centers.

¶4. A telecom contact of the embassy said June 12 that PTOs depending on Lagos NITEL infrastructure where striking NITEL employees have shut down equipment, in some cases gained access to these facilities using police escorts. The PTOs circumvented at least some effects of the strike by taking in with them mobile generators and using these to power the formerly shut-down NITEL equipment.

¶5. Telecom sources of the Lagos consulate reported June 12 that four senior leaders of the National Association of Telecommunications Employees were arrested that day, which will delay the strike's resolution. Labor experts predicted

the strike will not end soon. While the Government of Nigeria (GON) reported it had "released" on June 5 a total of 1.7 billion naira (about \$13.28 million) as part of the debts owed to NITEL by government ministries and parastatals, one source said this amount was actually 1.5 billion naira -- and that none of this had reached the strikers. The NITEL employees said they will continue the strike until they are paid. Both telecom experts and labor experts said the strike will negatively affect the GON's planned privatization of NITEL. All told, Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) network firms and PTOs reported revenue losses of more than 200 million naira (\$1.56 million) as a result of eight days of strikes.

16. Calls cannot get through on NITEL or M-Tel lines, while service provided by Globalcom, MTN, and V-Mobile remained erratic. All NITEL lines in Lagos and Abuja remained switched off. Embassy Abuja and Consulate Lagos's USG-owned satellite communications (data circuitry) with Washington remained unaffected.

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